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PICTURE STUDY IN ELEMENTARY GRADES

Designed Especially for Assistance of Teachers who are Training Pupils for Interscholastic League Picture Memory Contests

By

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Head of Art Department
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The benefits of education and of useful knowledge, generally diffused through a community, are essential to the preservation of a free government.

Sam Houston

Cultivated mind is the guardian genius of Democracy, and while guided and controlled by virtue, the noblest attribute of man. It is the only dictator that freemen acknowledge, and the only security which freemen desire.

Mirabeau B. Lamar

I. THE ARTIST'S TOOL CHEST

THERE are four important items in an artist's tool chest —line, form, notan, and color. Of course, he uses pencils, brushes, paints, and many other things, but these are only the material means of providing his real tools. These four elements are used in building the composition just as sound is used by the musician as the tool for producing a beautiful sonata.

Using the Tools

In pen and ink sketching, etching, lithograph and similar types of art expression, line is the only tool used, although lines may be grouped together to give the effect of notan—i.e., dark and light. Colors have dark and light qualities in themselves; so when an artist works in color he is using all four of his tools. Pictures can be reproduced effectively in sepia or black and white so that nothing but the color is lost. We can even reduce them to a line analysis and they still retain their identity. This makes it possible to understand the fact that every picture in color has an underlying scheme of dark and light and that within the dark and light pattern is a line plan.

Although the artist often uses light and shade as a means of developing the dark and light plan of his picture, the two terms must not be confused. Light and shade is simply the gradation of light to dark or dark to light used by the artist to suggest solidity in objects, while dark and light refers to the pattern or design made by the contrast of one mass against another.

The art of the sculptor and the architect depend largely upon the element of form as expressed in solid materials. The painter suggests form by means of light and shade and perspective.

Interesting arrangements of line, form, notan, and color cause an emotional reaction in the sensitive observer as intense as that provoked by subject matter. These arrangements affect us through the eye just as sound stimulates us through the ear. The observer may be unconscious of this effect and may think that it is the subject matter alone which he enjoys. Many modern artists try to produce various emotional effects by means of line, form, notan, and color in abstract arrangements.

The problem of the artist, then, is to use his tools in a way that will produce an emotional or intellectual response which is consistent with his theme. Without it the picture lacks that true harmony which lifts it out of the field of mere picture making into the realm of the fine arts.

Understanding the Artist

The cultivation of art appreciation means the developing of ability to understand and enjoy the manner in which the artist portrays his idea.

Pictures are rich in literary content and sentimental associations of various kinds. These are so closely related to aesthetic feeling that people often fail to make a distinction between them. A visitor to a museum was heard to state her preference for a certain picture because the trees in it looked like those on her grandfather's farm. If this happened to be her only reason for choosing the picture, it is probable that she was appreciating the trees on her grandfather's

farm rather than the picture as a unit of beauty, complete in itself. Hers was appreciation of nature rather than art. If she could have sensed the careful adjustment of one mass to another, the rhythm of line formed by the objects in the picture and the richness of the color, she would have had a basis for the enjoyment of pictures not limited to the field of her own experiences.

When we lead children to feel pleasure upon seeing the elements of art used in a fine way we are laying the foundation for their understanding and enjoyment of not one picture alone but all the art of the ages.

II. BUILDING A PICTURE

PICTURES ARE built upon structural principles just as definitely as a house is constructed according to a plan which was first conceived and drawn by an architect. Great pictures are seldom, if ever, the result of merely copying things as they appear in nature. There is always a selection of material and careful consideration of the arrangement of that material.

Many artists make a large number of trial sketches before the final plan is chosen. Pictures which have won the admiration of art lovers have been found to conform to certain fundamental principles of arrangement. Sometimes these have been given conscious consideration by the artist in the planning of the picture, or they may be the result of his sensitiveness to line, dark and light, and color.

The Dominant Idea

Our first glance at a picture should impress us with one dominant idea. This may be a central object or group of objects which seem more important than the rest of the picture. Frequently this is accomplished by means of contrasting color and tone or the lines of the composition may be related in a way that will lead the eye to a central area. In Gainsborough's Blue Boy the cold blue of the boy's suit against the warm brown of the background holds the eye strongly to the central figure. A more frequently used device is that of making the central figures or objects in warm or light colors while the surrounding parts are kept cool and soft in color. Mauve, in "Spring," directs the attention of the observer to a point near the head of the shepherd by means of allowing all the important lines to centralize there. Hobbema's "Middleharnais Avenue" is constructed like a spider's web with all lines leading in toward the center. This directing of attention to the central objects is designated as the principle of subordination because all parts of the picture must contribute something to the dominant idea and yet remain subordinate to it.

Repetition

Border designs are pleasing because of the principle of rhythm. The regular repetition of the same or similar things awakens in us a response not unlike the pleasure we feel as we watch the waves in a large body of water break upon the shore in rhythmic order. In all well planned pictures there is a certain amount of r h y t h m through repetition. In Raphaels' Madonna of the Chair it is

interesting to note the rhythmic lines of the circular motive. These are carefully adjusted to each other and to the shape of the picture which is itself a circle.

Opposition

While some repetition is essential to the success of any composition, too much of it without variation may produce monotony. To avoid this there must be a note of contrast. This may be found in lines which introduce a change of direction or in contrast of color and tone. Thus opposition becomes a third principle of composition.

Transition

Too many opposing elements in a picture may cause a crudity of relationship which is undesirable. In landscape composition the artist often harmonizes the strong perpendicular lines of tree trunks with an equally dominant horizon line, by placing hills in the distance. The slanting lines of the hillsides tend to form a transitional line between these two directions. In "End of Day," by Adan, the position in which the tools are carried helps to tie the perpendicular lines of the tree trunk and the figure to the horizontal line of the ground. Nature observes this principle of transition in the soft curves of tree branches where they grow out from the trunk, and in the human hand there is a web-like structure between the fingers which does away with sharp angles. This is true of many other nature forms.

Balance

All people are somewhat sensitive to balance. When we look at a picture we unconsciously estimate the weight of the objects we see there.

If one part of the picture seems to contain too much weight for the other parts we sense the lack of balance. The Japanese are fond of balancing a small object with a large one in the same way that a little child on a teeter board must be given more board when he teeters with a larger child. The trees in Corot's "Spring" exemplify this in that the small tree is given more space in the picture according to its size than the larger group. Also the figures are grouped near the small tree, giving it added weight.

Principles of Composition

The principles of composition may be listed as follows: Subordination, rhythm, opposition, transition (sometimes called unity), and balance. These have been discussed mainly from the standpoint of pictorial composition but they apply equally well to all forms of the space arts which include architecture, interior decoration, sculpture, costume design and others. Finding these principles in pictures helps to develop a power of appreciation which is independent of subject matter or interest in mere surface qualities.

References: Composition, A. W. Dow; Art in the School, Belle Boas.

III. SECURING THE CENTER OF INTEREST

ONE of the first art ideas to be grasped by the child is that each picture contains one dominating center of interest; that is, one point of attraction around which the rest of the composition seems to be built.

In some pictures this center is represented by a single object and in others by a group of objects.

Occasionally we find a picture in which no specific object appears at the center of interest but the same effect is achieved by developing a certain area of the composition in some unique way. In the test on unfamiliar pictures the students are asked to decide which of several devices the artist has chosen as a means of directing attention to the center of interest.

Contrast of Value, Color or Size

One of the simplest ways of securing a center of interest is to make one object larger than anything else in the picture. This may be done by choosing, for the central object, something which is naturally larger than anything else in the composition, and keeping all objects in proportion; or by placing the central object so near the observer that all other objects must be smaller because of the effect of perspective. (See "Blue Vase" by Cezanne and "Near the River Seine" by Seurat.)

In many pictures still greater variety is secured by using contrast of value and color. Even though the central object remains similar to other objects on size, it can be given a sufficient amount of importance by making the value and color different from that of surrounding areas. The white dress in "Age of Innocence," and the white robe of the Boy in "Boy Christ in the Temple" are examples of contrast of tone. The red dress in "Children of Charles I" provides contrast of color. In the last mentioned picture the group of children may be considered the center of interest, but

of these, the one in the red dress is the most outstanding figure.

Action, Pose and Interesting Design

Although the subject-matter of the picture offers no opportunity for securing a center of interest through contrast of size, value or color, the artist still has at hand a means of obtaining a good result. He can make his figures so unique in design or pose them in such an interesting way that the eye is attracted to them. In "Infanta Margarita Theresia" the elaborate design of the child's dress helps to establish the center of interest. In "The Storage Room" and in "Return of the Fishermen" the action expressed by the poses of the figures holds the interest of the observer. How many other pictures can you find which secure the center of interest in this way?

Lines Leading to a Central Point

Lines usually form the most important basis of any composition. The eye follows line. For this reason line arrangements offer a valuable device for directing attention to any desired point. The places where lines meet or cross attract the attention irresistibly. Even the natural convergence of the vanishing-lines in perspective achieves this result. Study "Avenue of Trees," and "Battersea Bridge" in order to discover the play of line direction. In "Boy Christ in the Temple" the pronounced direction of gaze of the old men provides a substitute for definite lines.

Framing of Central Area

The artist always encounters a problem in "getting around the corners" of his picture. Corners must be kept subdued in order that attention shall not be directed away from

the center of interest. Too much interest in the corners leads the eye out of the picture. A device frequently used, to avoid attention at corners, is that of placing objects so that their edges form transitional lines between the perpendicular and horizontal boundaries of the picture. This helps the eye to move around a central area. Sometimes the same effect is secured by having the observer see the important things through an arch or arcade of trees, branches, columns or other similar forms which serve as a "frame" around the central area. In "Storage Room" the doorways frame the rooms beyond, in "Dance of the Nymphs" the trees frame the area in which some of the figures dance, and in "Age of Innocence" the child's head is placed against a light blue area which is framed by the dark brown of the corners and foreground of the picture.

Many Devices Used in Each Picture

Seldom does an artist limit himself to one device for establishing the center of interest, but, having once established it he uses every available means of strengthening it, at the same time retaining the harmony of the composition. Ordinarily one or more of the devices used is evident upon examination of the picture. In the contest the child is given opportunity to select two devices which he thinks are outstanding. This plan should avoid confusion in cases where there is doubt as to which means is of greater importance in securing the result. The child should always choose the ones which he believes are the most important.

IV. SUBJECT MATTER IN PICTURES

A GREAT theme does not insure a great masterpiece in painting any more than it does in literature, yet the artist's choice of subject matter is an important part of his problem. Artists become noted for their manner of handling certain subjects, just as writers do. To find and develop those subjects which best suit his own personality and manner of expression is the desire of every artist. Thus the study of the artist's selection of subject matter becomes interesting to every picture lover.

Still-Life

Any object, no matter how insignificant it may appear, can be made attractive when used as a motif for composition in the hands of certain artists. Ordinary objects of everyday use become marvels of beauty and harmony when arranged in the proper setting and painted in an interesting way. Cezanne was especially gifted in ability to create attractive arrangements of still-life objects. Flowers, fruit, vases, and bowls were his favorite themes.

Any object which does not possess the power of voluntary movement is usually classified as "still-life" in painting. Although landscapes and interiors might, in a certain sense, be considered still-life, the term is usually not applied to these themes but generally refers to groups of smaller objects. "Blue Vase," "Blue

Window," and "Sunflowers" are still-life subjects included in the picture contests.

Portrait

All pictures of people are not portraits but only those in which the interpretation of the character of the sitter has been the artists's prime purpose. It is possible to have more than one portrait in a composition as in "Children of Charles I" by Van Dyck. In this picture the artist appears to have made a definite study of the individuality of each child rather than merely painting three children. "Laughing Cavalier," "The Merchant Gisze," and "George Washington" are compositions which contain only one portrait.

Portraits are painted to endure. For this reason, we find in them little of the violent action and casual treatment characteristic of the ordinary illustration.

Genre

Genre painting differs from portrait in that the former emphasizes setting and action rather than the individuality of the characters. Figures are used as a means of presenting an idea rather than for their own sake. In "Storage Room" the figures have no particular interest aside from the part they play in depicting an everyday incident of life in a Dutch home.

Religious

Most of our religious painting has been contributed by the Italians. Their work has so influenced the world that one sometimes experiences difficulty in identifying a religious painting as such unless it bears definite marks of the Italian influence. Generally speaking, we

may consider as religious painting any picture in which Scriptural characters have been used, Christianity being the chief religion of the countries whose pictures we are studying. Ordinarily, pictures of saints alone are considered portraits rather than religious compositions, unless they are "saints" of Bible times.

It is entirely possible that certain pictures might be considered religious among special groups of individuals and not among others, but within the limits of our contest material the rule of "Scriptural subject" is a safe guide.

Landscape

Few people have difficulty in recognizing an outdoor scene as landscape but some are hesitant regarding what to do with a scene that shows water and no land. In the contests the bracketed term "seascape" helps to explain this. In this modern day we might find a picture whose entire setting is in the clouds. Such might be called an "airscape," but in order to avoid foolish and unnecessary differentiations let us consider any out-of-door scene a landscape unless the landscape serves only as a background for other material.

Animal

Animals are often used as part of the subject matter in pictures. In "Children of Charles I" we find a large dog, "Near the River Seine" contains a variety of animals, yet these could not be considered animal compositions because the animals play only a minor part. In "Shoeing the Mare," the case is different. Here the animals are the chief interest and the figure is secondary,

as evidenced by the prominent position of the animals.

In determining which classification of subject matter to choose for an individual picture, one should consider only the most important factors and ignore the minor ones. Try to decide what the artist really intended to paint. Confusion is possible but ordinarily teachers will experience little difficulty in helping children to classify subject matter if the above suggestions are followed.

V. VARIETY OF EXPRESSION IN PAINTING

IN ORDER to be convinced of the possibility of identifying an artist by the style of his work we have only to make a brief study of painting. Each artist's work shows characteristics which are as distinctly individual as is his personality. Entire schools and periods of painting are classified in the same manner, varying according to the amount of emphasis placed upon certain phases of art expression. Today the terms realistic, decorative, and impressionistic reveal the layman's attempt to define these styles.

Realistic Painting

The term "realistic painting" usually means the type of work wherein the artist shows a passion for facts. His manner of thinking is more scientific than artistic in that each object is carefully analyzed as to its form and structure so that all possible information about it is presented. Among

inferior artists, realism is sometimes expressed in a tendency toward too much literary interest. Careful portrayal of texture, material, form and weight is often in evidence when the artist makes realism his chief concern.

Zeuxis, the Greek artist who is said to have painted grapes so realistically that the birds came to peck at his canvas, seems fairly representative of the ideal of this class of painters, although even these artists conceive of their problem as being something more than mere photographic accuracy. Albert C. Barnes says: "The artist must open our eyes to what unaided we could not see." The realistic artist tries to show us the important facts.

Rosa Bonheur's chief interest was realism. Her pains to achieve anatomical accuracy led her to use rare devices in order to obtain information, even that of donning man's apparel that she might attend the horse fair, where no woman was allowed.

Decorative and Symbolic Painting

"The world of art is a world which has been made by human beings for the direct satisfaction of their wishes. It is the real world stripped of what is meaningless and alien and remodeled nearer to the heart's desire," says Albert C. Barnes. This appears to be in direct opposition to the attitude of the realistic painter who is primarily concerned with the world as it is. Painters of the early Italian schools were concerned with the development of pictures which would inspire the emotions of adoration and reverence. In order to do this, realities were often disregarded. Symbols were used to express ideas. These symbols were arranged to form an

attractive design which could be used to decorate a space in a church or other building. The work of the early Italian artists was "decorative" or "symbolic" rather than representative.

Artists of a modern day use symbolism to express emotions and ideas. Some of them feel that unless this is done the observer loses himself in the process of identifying objects and misses the spirit of the expression. Other artists retain the natural shapes of objects in so far as they can be made to fit into the plan of the composition but the representation is always subordinate to the arrangement. Mural painting offers many examples of objects painted in a decorative manner. The general flatness of the tones, the subtle relationship of colors and the studied arrangement of spaces in Whistler's paintings suggest the artist's interest in the decorative handling of his subject.

Impressionistic Painting

Nearly everyone is familiar with the rather loose texture characteristic of some impressionistic painting. Although this is one of the outstanding qualities of the work, it does not provide a complete description. Impressionism deals with the effect of light. One of the many interesting ways in which light may be handled is the use of contrasting colors in juxtaposition. The blurred edges of objects in the distance is also a device of the impressionists, who are concerned with atmospheric effects. Barnes names the following chief characteristics of impressionistic technique: "(1) Application of spots of pure color side by side in all parts of the canvas; (2) Obvious brush work

in the application of color; (3) Variation of the sizes of the spots of color and of the sizes and perceptibility of the brush strokes; (4) Use of light in connection with color in three ways: first, as a sort of focus upon which the light is concentrated in order to bring out the glow of the color; second, as a general illumination by which the canvas is flooded with sunlight; third, by such a distribution of this colored light all over the canvas that a homogeneous color mass replaces the literal representation of perspective heretofore employed by painters." Turner's "Fighting Temeraire" and Monet's "Poplars' are good examples of the painting of light effects.

Type of Painting Must Be Considered

Before reaching a decision regarding the success of a painting, a careful consideration of the style is necessary. To judge impressionism by the same standards which are applied to realism is sure to be a disappointing experience, but when each style of art is judged by good standards of what that particular type of work should do, we catch a vision of the variety of expression that is possible in the field of painting.

Reference: *The Art in Painting.* Albert C. Barnes.

VI. IMPORTANT MEDIUMS IN ART

STUDY of the evolution of the arts reveals an interesting variety of materials used in the production of the world's masterpieces. The nature of these

materials exerts a definite influence upon the final appearance of the work. Each separate medium has characteristics with which the artist seeks to harmonize his choice of subject and manner of presenting it. All mediums will not serve the same purpose.

An artist who is proficient in the use of water colors seldom possesses the same degree of skill in oil painting, etching or other types of art expression. Naturally, artists prefer to express their ideas in that medium which is best adapted to their particular styles of work, but most of them find more than one congenial material. Whistler excelled in etching as well as in painting; Michelangelo in sculpture and painting; while Da Vinci holds the record for variety of activity, some of it extending into the scientific field.

Rigid Material

The stone-cutting and wood-carving of pre-historic days contain fine examples of work executed in harmony with the medium used because early artists were not inclined to imitate one material by means of another. The material controlled the manner of working as well as the design; thus they avoided discrepancies of the kind which occurred during later periods when artisans reproduced in marble the design which the sculptor had modeled in clay. It was difficult for the artist, while working with the plastic clay, to imagine the rigidity of stone. The bronze statue, "The Appeal to the Great Spirit," by Dallin, harmonizes with the metallic quality of the bronze without loss of feel-

ing. The Saint-Gaudens statue of Lincoln and the Donatello statue of Saint George are also excellent examples of adaptation to medium.

Painting, as well as sculpture, requires careful adjustment to the materials used.

Water Color

Water color painting is noted for its fresh, fluid-like quality which cannot be achieved successfully with any other medium. In order to be a water-colorist of merit the artist must learn to strive for those effects which are readily adaptable to a flowing treatment. Most of the charm of water color lies in its direct, clear-cut and spontaneous handling. Those who do not understand the peculiarities of water color fail to appreciate pictures painted in this medium because the colors seem thin when compared with oil colors. Water color has a charm of its own which we can enjoy to the utmost when we seek delicacy, refinement, light and spontaneity.

Oil Painting

Oil colors are considered the most serious and permanent material for painting. Most well known master pieces are painted in oil, the medium which is most popular with the layman. Richness is its outstanding quality. The earlier painters ground and mixed their own colors or had the work done by apprentices under their direction. Although the above methods no longer prevail, the worker in oil paints must be something of a chemist in order to avoid combinations of colors which react unfavorably upon each other. Paintings which have darkened or become discolored with age are frequently the

result of unfortunte chemical combinations. The poor condition of Leonardo Da Vinci's "Last Supper" is due to an unsatisfactory experiment with the paint.

Oil painting is adaptable to numerous moods and to great diversity of treatment, ranging from the studied precision of Giotto to the rather loose vigorous handling of the impressionists. El Greco works with colors in a very dark key. Titian's warmth of color would have been impossible in any other medium. Even Monet's light, airy mood finds perfection in this medium.

Wooden panels, canvas, specially prepared boards and metal plates are the most commonly used backgrounds for oil painting. Tradition suggests that the Madonna of the Chair may have been painted upon an old barrel top.

Mural Art

Fresco painting runs a close second to oil color in richness of effect and in popularity among the early artists. This type of painting was done on a plastered surface while the plaster was wet. The artist completed a small section each day and did not allow the plaster to dry until that part was finished. Fresco painting was used chiefly for wall decoration, but today most murals are painted on canvas and later applied to the walls.

Time has brought progress in regard to the number of mediums at the disposal of the artist but space does not permit a discussion of many of them. Those mentioned above are the ones most commonly used.

Distinguishing Mediums

A person cannot determine the medium which was used in a painting by looking at a photograph of that painting. The photograph reveals only tones without texture or color. The case of statuary is different. The keen edges and general hardness of appearance as well as the way in which the highlights are distributed suggest the stone or metal of which the statue is made. The presence of a base or other means of support also serves to identify statuary.

The true artist works always in harmony with and never against his medium. We can add much to our enjoyment of the products of art by experimenting with the different mediums. In doing this we may not produce a beautiful picture, but when we realize our own lack of skill in controlling unruly streaks of color, we at once feel a greater respect for the artist's mastery over his medium. Attempting to do the thing is, after all, the best means of developing power of appreciation.

VII. THE PLACE OF COLOR IN PAINTING

WITH the exception of those artists who work in black and white only, the study of color has always been important to every school of painting. The impressionists concern themselves with color and its association with light more than they do with any other means of creating beauty. Others, while refusing to give this element first

rank, acknowledge its importance in every painting.

Color a "Flavor"

A proper conception of the place of color in painting may be gained from the following statement quoted from "The Art of Seeing," by Woodbury and Perkins: "We take light as a necessity and color as its flavor, we enjoy our color as we do the taste of our food." In order to enjoy fully the "flavor" of a picture, an opportunity to view the original is essential, but where this contact is impossible, an excellent substitute for it is to be found in the study of good color prints.

The variety of expression possible with the use of color is infinite. Some colors are sombre and dark like El Greco's, but others like Van Gogh's appear to "sing" because they are so gay. In Potthast's "The Holiday" the colors seem as airy as sea breezes and as gay as the children in the picture. This harmony of color with theme is an important aid to the creation of the "mood" of the picture.

According to Woodbury and Perkins, "There is no physical reason why one color should give us any greater emotion of pleasure than another of the same intensity, yet we have definite color preferences both personal and racial." Because of this element of personal choice, certain colors or combinations of color cannot be designated as "the best" in every case. In other words, colors do not stand alone but are affected by every other color associated with them and also by the shape and size of the objects within the composition.

Picture Not a Copy

Objects in a picture do not have to be the color of the same objects in

nature. Reproduction of nature is not essential to beautiful composition. A picture is a created object, complete in itself. Those who enjoy it will rarely, if ever, see the original objects which inspired the painting so comparison is not likely; neither is it desirable. A slight or definite departure from nature's coloring provides an element of design which gives added interest to the picture. A corresponding departure from the natural form of objects usually accompanies such variation of color.

A fifth grade child expressed the idea of nature as inspiration for, rather than master of the composition when he said, "Rabbits are not green but this one I am making is not a real rabbit—it is a design rabbit. Green goes well with the other colors in my design so I shall paint him green."

Pictures are like designs in that the artist has free choice as to how he will interpret nature's form and coloring. Therefore our question should not be, "Is it like nature?" Instead of that we should ask, "What beautiful relationships are to be found and how were they built up?"

Color Symbolism

The early Italian artists were fond of using color as symbolism. The white of purity and the blue of truth were used in the drapery of practically every Virgin Mary. Red was used as the symbol of love and sacrifice. Dull yellow, a color associated with cowardice and deceit, was often chosen for the robe of Judas.

We must look to the modern artists for the use of gay and light colors in painting. Yellow-green, the symbol of youth and the freshness of spring, is appropriately manifest in "After a Summer Shower" by George Inness.

Van Gogh chooses brillance and strong contrasts while Manet's colors sparkle with light.

All modern artists have not used brilliant color. Chavannes and Whistler delighted in a decorative style which made use of subtle relationships.

Rich Color of Old Masters

The colors used by early painters are remarkable for their richness. This is due in part to the fact that the pictures, being very old, have undergone the refining process of time. Another suggested reason is that each artist knew the chemistry of his paints well enough to avoid combinations of uncongenial elements. The modern artist is not always well informed on this matter because his paint is purchased in prepared form instead of being mixed by himself. The first artists mixed their own paints.

In spite of personal preferences for specific colors and color combinations, those who are interested may, through study of good examples, learn to appreciate the beauty of color well used and understand why this kind of harmony is essential to all good painting.

VIII. SIMPLE THEORIES OF COLOR

KNOWLEDGE of color theory is useful as a guide in discovering harmonious combinations of hue, value, and intensity. Those who are fortunate enough to sense good combinations of color in the same manner that a musician attunes his

ear to harmony of sound, need not be dependent upon a mechanical means of selection. Others, who do not readily understand the use of color, will find their feeling for it growing as they learn the nature of the color elements. A detailed discussion is impossible here, but the purpose of the writer is to present such color facts as will make the subject seem less strange to those who have had no opportunity to study color theory.

The Basic Colors

In order to follow this discussion the reader should have at hand some plain white paper and a box of crayons or water colors.

A successful elementary theory of color is based upon three primaries, which are red, yellow, and blue. With the crayons or water colors place a spot of each of the above mentioned colors where each color will mark the corner of an equilateral triangle. For convenience in understanding the explanation place yellow at the top, red at the left, and blue at the right.

By mixing together two of the primaries in all of the possible combinations, a second group of three is secured. Yellow and red mixed together make orange, so place orange in the space between yellow and red; blue and yellow make green, so place this color between the two colors of which it is composed; purple must be placed between blue and red. Orange, green, and purple make the secondary group of three.

The chart you are making should now suggest a circle with colors arranged (clockwise) in the following order: Red, orange, yellow, green, blue, purple. These are the "six standard colors."

Color Schemes

In mixing any secondary color, two of the primaries are used and one of them is omitted. For example, when blue and red are mixed together to make purple, yellow is the only primary color which is not used. The use of yellow would be necessary in order to complete the primary triad; therefore yellow is considered the complement (complete-ment) of purple. After the same manner, red is the complement of green and blue the complement of orange.

When true complements are mixed together in equal quantities they neutralize each other and the result is gray. Most pigments are not perfectly balanced so experimentation with them will show the necessity of adding an extra amount of blue in order to secure a neutral gray.

Starting with the six standard colors, let us carry this mixing process a step farther, placing additional colors in the spaces between the colors we already have. Each one of these "tertiary" colors will be formed by mixing together the two colors on either side of it. Thus another group of six colors will be produced. For example, red and orange mixed together will produce red-orange; orange and yellow will be mixed to make orange-yellow and the rest of the tertiaries will be secured in the same manner. When completed the chart will have twelve colors. They should be arranged in the following order: Red, red-orange, orange, yellow-orange, y e l l o w, green-yellow,

green, blue-green, blue, purple-blue, purple, red-purple.

With the color circle before us the three most commonly used types of color schemes can be explained without difficulty.

1. Complementary—Also known as "opposite" colors because of their positions across from each other on the color circle. The following may be considered fundamental complementary combinations:

a. Red and green.
b. Orange and blue.
c. Yellow and purple.

2. Analogous—Colors which have common elements. For example, yellow-green, green, and blue-green are all composed of blue and yellow, the difference between them being only in the quantity of the elements. Analogous colors are also known as "neighboring" colors because of their position next to each other on the color circle.

3. Monochromatic—The combining of several tones of a single color. The dark and light tones of any color form a monochromatic color scheme. Other tones of the same color may be added.

The widely used Munsell theory of color is more subtle in its relationships than the "six color" theory. Because of this fact a better balance of color is secured. In order to understand the essential elements of the Munsell theory, go through the same process of arranging colors in a circle but start with five standard colors instead of six as in the first arrangement. Orange is the color to omit from the standards. This will bring about a slightly different arrangement of complements. The complementary combinations will now be as follows:

1. Red and blue-green.
2. Yellow and blue-purple.
3. Green and red-purple.
4. Blue and yellow-red (orange).
5. Purple and yellow-green.

"Split-complementary" schemes are especially interesting. These are composed of a color in combination with the two colors on either side of its complement.

Analogous and monochromatic schemes remain practically the same in both of the previously discussed theories.

Identifying Colors

Students often develop considerable interest in identifying the different types of color schemes in pictures, their own clothing and other objects. When making these associations it is well to remember that brown is considered a dark orange or a dark yellow according to the amount of red that it contains. Black, gray, and white are neutrals rather than colors, so should be left out of consideration when identifying color schemes. In any color scheme that is harmonious some colors must be brighter than others. The combination of blue and red does not occur in any of the schemes mentioned, yet it is often found in costume. This may be explained by the fact that the skin tones supply a certain amount of yellow to complete the primary triad. Neutrals combined with colors also serve to establish a transition which helps to relate colors.

The selection of color according to the foregoing theories does not guarantee an harmonious arrangement since much depends upon the quantity of color used and its manner of distribution. This brief explanation should merely give a key to probable successful arrangements.

IX. TYPES OF COMPOSITION

NO absolute rule can be given which will guarantee successful arrangement in the composition of a picture, yet certain dominant ideas are prevalent in most of the world's masterpieces.

Aside from the principles of design, which are observed either consciously or intuitively by every artist, definite plans of arrangement can be detected by the careful observer.

Vertical and Horizontal Composition

The simplest type of line plan is the vertical and horizontal arrangement in which the important lines of the composition follow the above mentioned directions. Whistler's "Battersea Bridge" is predominantly vertical and horizontal in design. True, there are in the picture lines which take an angular direction and others which are curved, but these are the shorter and less important ones. Compositions of this type are especially adaptable to the expression of great dignity and solemnity. People wonder at the feeling of reverence and awe which they experience as they enter a cathedral, but few realize that the long vertical lines of the gothic columns are responsible, at least in part, for the creation of this mood.

The vertical and horizontal arrangement is more subject to the danger of becoming standardized and commonplace than are the others. Unless it is skillfully handled, the distant vision can be cut off in a way that will force the eye to engage itself with things in the foreground instead of carrying the vision back into the picture. When this happens, the composition lacks depth and interest.

Teachers, in arranging models from which students are to draw, often thoughtlessly place a curtain or other background directly behind the objects, thus cutting off any opportunity for showing things in their relation to distance. Sometimes it is desirable, for the purpose of concentration on forms, to isolate objects in this way, but greater variety of composition is possible when greater distance is permitted. The earlier Italian masters did not make extensive use of perspective so the vertical and horizontal arrangement is much in evidence in their work.

Circular Composition

The "circular" composition is particularly suitable for the expression of rhythm. Pictures containing rolling hills, waves, or billowy clouds adjust themselves to this type. Raphael's "Madonna of the Chair" is one of the best examples of figures used in circular composition. The picture, as well as being circular in shape, is built up entirely of curves. These are seen in the somewhat rounded faces of the children, in the halos above their heads and in parts of the chair. Even the positions of the figures are such that the group suggests a circular shape.

Angular Composition

The angular type of composition is the most complicated of all and, of the three here discussed, offers the greatest number of possibilities for variation. It is capable of leading the eye into the picture for unlimited distances. Because of their interest in effects of dynamic movement, modern artists use angles extensively. In the architecture of "A Century of Progress" in Chicago the angular scheme was strongly emphasized.

Combined Types of Composition

Few pictures conform exclusively to any one plan of arrangement. Although one idea may predominate, elements of the others enter into each composition. Cimabue's "Madonna Enthroned" is fundamentally perpendicular and horizontal but the circular element is also strongly marked.

It is a mistake to analyze pictures in too scientific a manner because their beauty lies mainly in the extent to which they depart from any standardized plan and yet retain their unity. However, helping children to classify outstanding examples of composition often makes them more sensitive to order and arrangement in their own work and develops considerable appreciative insight.

X. TEACHING THE APPRECIATION LESSON

THE "appreciation lesson," as the name implies, is taught for the purpose of developing the child's capacity for enjoyment of good things. The value of such a lesson is unquestioned because of the fact that an individual's enjoyable experiences tend to furnish occupation for his leisure time and the manner in which leisure moments are used is an important factor in the building of character. Henry Turner Bailey states it thus:

Right Use of Leisure All-Important

"Our moral excellence and efficiency are dependent largely upon what we do with our leisure. Our character changes but little while we are doing

the things we have to do to make a living. How can it change while we are plowing or reaping, doing housework or attending honestly to customers? There is little chance to go wrong in a schoolroom with forty pairs of eyes upon us, or in a bank with steel grills left and right, fore and aft, or in a factory with thoughtless and relentless machinery to manage, or while driving a locomotive, an automobile or an airplane. No; our character changes when we stop driving, and have time to do something else; when the day's work is done; when we are off duty and can do as we please. The use we make of our precious moments of leisure is the significant thing, the most potent factor in life."

The greater the number of worthwhile things that the child enjoys, the more profitable will his leisure time be.

If love of beauty is to become an influence in the child's life, the lesson which seeks to bring this about must be in itself an enjoyable experience and one that helps the child to recognize the elements of beauty.

Making the Lesson Interesting

There are few children who are not sensitive to beauty in some form. A bright flower, a colorful butterfly wing, a bird or a tree often furnish the experience necessary for directing interest to an artist's interpretation of a nature theme. The skillful teacher will find numerous ways of establishing a c o n t a c t between familiar things and the new material which is to be presented.

A procedure which may become irksome to the child should of course be avoided in any lesson but particularly in the appreciation lesson. Monotony must be avoided for fear that should

the conditions of the lesson be associated with what is taught the child may develop a dislike for the entire subject.

Planning the Lesson

The lesson must be well planned from the standpoint of time. This means that it must not be long unless interest runs high enough to warrant its continuation. In the primary grades ten to fifteen minutes is as long as the child's span of attention permits him to follow a discussion. The length of time may be increased as the child matures. If opportunity is given for variety of reaction, the length of time may be increased.

The material must be selected for its relationship to the child's capacity for enjoyment. The teacher should remember, however, that the child often interprets easily certain things which an adult finds difficult to understand. Adults are often disturbed because of incorrect proportion and perspective while these items offer no problems to the child because he has not yet discovered a need for them.

The subject matter must be worthy of study. If it does not have definite artistic merit we simply develop appreciation of the wrong thing and thus lower standards instead of raising them.

Poems and stories about the artist or the work of art often add interest, but such devices must not be allowed to direct attention to themselves rather than to the main subject of study. If they are used at all the correlation should be complete so as to avoid possible misconceptions.

Developing the Lesson

Teachers sometimes find themselves at a loss in teaching the appreciation lesson because they lack knowledge of

the artist and of conditions under which the picture was produced. While such information is desirable, and often adds greatly to the interest of the lesson, the teacher must remember that any product which has art value is worthy of study for its own sake and is capable of carrying its own message. Children may be led to study the picture for the sake of the pleasure it gives and not primarily for the information that may be secured in connection with it. Picture study is profitable without knowing even so much as the name of the production just as a poem may be enjoyed because of its own beauty of style without the reader's delving into its origin and the history of the author.

Should Develop Art Interest

Questions should be thought-provoking. Types of questions which are good in other subjects are also good in the appreciation lessons. If the study is to be truly one in art appreciation these questions should develop art interest rather than literary interest. Questions about the probable customs of the people in a composition and the making of stories inspired by the picture have their value in language work and as such they serve as a valuable supplement to the work in art appreciation, but such work is incapable of developing a high degree of art interest.

Even very young children derive much pleasure from finding specific shapes and line directions in a picture. They also like to decide why the artist has presented things in certain ways. Discussions of this type help to provide the basis for good artistic judgment and tend to equip the child with power to enjoy beauty for its own sake.

XI. STUDYING PICTURES

I DO NOT know much about artists and cannot find information about the pictures I wish to teach." This statement in one form or another is frequently made by teachers in an attempt to justify the scarcity of art appreciation lessons in their classes. These teachers forget that the picture itself, provided it is one worthy of study, offers sufficient material for a worth while lesson in art appreciation.

While knowledge of facts adds interest and supplies a desirable background for study, the securing of information should never become the main issue of the lesson or take the place of first hand study of the art product. When facts are made too important they may, in certain instances, become an actual barrier to the child's complete enjoyment of the picture because attention is given to the acquiring of information instead of being centered upon the beauty of the picture.

In attempting to avoid undue emphasis upon information about pictures and artists, teachers are prone to gather abundant literary material. Poems and stories are good devices for arousing interest when they are closely correlated with the picture and not used to the extreme but in these also there is danger of leading interest away from the picture instead of to it.

Language Lessons

Pictures used in connection with language work have a tendency to

promote over-emphasis upon subject matter. The child not only discusses all the objects he sees in the picture but also draws upon his imagination to provide material for conversation. Stories are invented and based upon objects or characters in the picture. Any contact whatsoever that the child may have with pictures no doubt adds to his interest in them. Language lessons which use pictures furnish a valuable supplement to the work in art appreciation but power of enjoyment from the truly artistic viewpoint cannot be gained in this way.

True teaching of art appreciation should seek to provide the individual with a basis for judgment for all beauty in whatever form it is presented. The child should be led to find beauty in pictures which are unfamiliar to him as well as those concerning which he has acquired a fund of information. In order to do this he must be made sensitive to fine relationships in elements of the space arts. This can be accomplished only through the observation of fine examples and discussion of their desirable features. Questions should direct attention to the art quality and not entirely to the informational and literary phases of study. Teachers have little difficulty in formulating questions of the last two types mentioned but questions which deal with art interest are not so easily handled. The following lists of questions which emphasize art qualities in specific pictures are presented in the hope that they may be helpful in leading teachers to analyze pictures more easily:

Madonna and Angels

1. In most compositions the important lines are circular, angular or

vertical and horizontal. Into which classification does this one fit best?

2. In how many places can you find circles and parts of circles in the architecture?

3. What shape does the arrangement of the angels suggest?

4. What has the artist done to the halo of the Christ Child in order to make it more important than any in the picture even though it is the smallest?

5. In how many different ways has the artist led us to look at the Virgin and Child?

6. No two angels are exactly alike. Look at each one and see how many differences you can find. What makes them look so much alike at first glance when they are really so different?

7. What symbolism do you find?

8. Why has the artist selected for the Virgin's dress a color so nearly like that of the Child's skin?

9. Why is the dark blue a better color for the robe of the Virgin than a light color would have been?

10. In how many different places are stars used as a part of the design?

Sunflowers

1. Which of the four elements of art is most important to this painting?

2. Colors are sometimes classified as to warm and cold ones. Which are most in evidence?

3. Why has the artist left the surface of the paint so rough?

4. Why is the vase not symmetrical?

5. Certain parts of the objects are outlined with contrasting color. Why was this done? Why was not every part outlined?

6. Why has the artist used a greenish blue background instead of one which is purplish blue?

7. In how many ways are the centers of the flowers different from each other?

8. Why has the white spot been placed on the vase?

9. Find the flower which is lightest in color and the one which is darkest. Try to give each a place in relation to these two, grading from light to dark.

10. In what way is this type of painting so well suited to this particular variety of flower?

Saint Genevieve

1. Which type of line arrangement is most in evidence? Find the three most important vertical objects.

2. Why are the colors so soft?

3. What has the artist done to make us see Saint Genevieve first?

4. What has the artist used on the right of the picture to balance the yellow color of the moon on the left?

5. In how many different ways has the artist given an effect of quiet and repose in the picture?

6. Notice that the picture is broken horizontally into several panels: Which of these have plain surfaces and which have broken surfaces? Why has a plain surface been placed next to a broken surface in each case?

7. Most of the lines in the picture are straight but some of them are circular. Find the circular lines. What is there about the placing of these that makes them balance each other?

8. Why are there few contrasts of color or of dark and light in this picture?

9. There is something near the center of the picture that repeats the color and tone of Saint Genevieve's robe. What is it?

10. What kind of lines give the picture most of its dignity?

Golden Windows

A well known fairy tale by Laura E. Richards describes a certain child's delight in discovering that a house which stood some distance from his own poor dwelling had golden windows. These windows could be seen only at sunset time. Evening after evening the child enjoyed the spectacle. One evening he decided to walk to this house in order to see the windows at close range. Upon arriving there he found only a poor shack like his own, but his disappointment was turned into joy when, upon turning homeward, he discovered that the windows of his own home looked like shining gold in the sunset. In this story the child was led to see that ordinary things could look beautiful and yet the fact remained that in the knowledge of what caused the effect some of the pleasure was lost. In studying pictures the teacher should always bear in mind the fact that analysis is only a means of helping the child to enjoy the picture. Pleasure in emotional appeal must not be lost in trying to discover how the effect was gained but if directed in the right way analysis of art qualities adds to the child's enjoyment of all pictures.

XII. THE UNFAMILIAR PICTURES

IN preparation for the test on "unfamiliar pictures," teachers of Texas are in the habit of having children attempt the classification of "memory contest" pictures. This practice is

to be commended because it encourages study of the picture itself instead of the consideration of its name only and that of the artist.

Because the list of pictures for the "memory contest" is larger than the one for the "unfamiliar pictures," and because the pictures in the former group are less limited as to type than those in the latter group, certain difficulties of classification have arisen. The purpose of the writer is to discuss some of the most troublesome questions which have developed, hoping to clarify and unify their answers.

Can All Pictures Be Classified?

The uniqueness of an art product is the thing which, plus beauty, makes it a "masterpiece"; therefore any attempt at classification must of necessity be general. Pictures are capable of expressing unlimited individuality and for this reason all of them cannot be grouped according to one set criteria; consequently, teachers have experienced difficulty in discovering where to place certain doubtful examples.

The most important fact to be kept in mind is that the "unfamiliar pictures" are selected for their fitness of adaptation to definite classification. In cases where any element of doubt exists the test has been so arranged that any of the possible correct answers will be accepted. If pictures in the "memory contest" list were limited to only those which could be clearly designated, much of the world's finest art would have to be eliminated. Teachers should not hesi-

tate to classify under various headings those pictures which show characteristics of more than one element.

Troyan's "Return to the Farm" has been cited as a picture whose characteristics are confusing. It has both animal and landscape subject matter with about equal emphasis on both. Choosing between these two interests is not necessary. It may be listed under both headings. Of course, this may not be done in the test on "unfamiliar pictures" where only one classification is permitted. However, the test has been so arranged that there will be no need for more than one classification. In "Return to the Farm" the animals appear to be a part of the landscape rather than the landscape having been painted merely to serve as a background for the animals. Consequently, "landscape" would be the first choice in classification but "animals" would not be wrong.

Purpose Is to Train Child's Judgment

If the teacher will look upon the "memory contest" pictures as a means of developing the child's capacity for appreciation rather than as a list of things to be checked and catalogued properly, she will go a long way toward solving the problems of the "unfamiliar picture" contest. She should feel that it is not necessary to classify every picture in all points. She should ask for the child's opinions and if he can give a good reason for them, respect his choices. Since experts disagree on matters of this kind, attempting too rigid a classification is a mistake.

Attitude Toward the Tests

If a teacher feels that a picture has many or possibly all of the characteristics mentioned in any division

of the test, he should ask himself which of these is most important. Authorities will always disagree on matters involving art judgment. If positive answers were given the test would resolve itself into one of memory only and in this way lose its greatest value.

It is our privilege as teachers to help children to realize that the chief value of such competition lies not in the winning of a high score but in the opportunity given to compare our way of thinking with that of others in order to increase our own appreciation and judgment.

Editor's Note: Miss Lowe in this chapter suggests a fundamental matter in education, viz., a difference between "learning" and "rote learning." Memorizing the multiplication table is useful; memorizing theorems and proofs in geometry is worse than useless. Use the picture study to develop judgment and discrimination; not to memorize answers to a set of definite questions.

Additional copies of this pamphlet may be secured from the University Interscholastic League, P. O. Box 1930, University Station, Austin, Texas, at 10 cents per copy.